

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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***House Bipartisan Group of Authors of the Homeland
Security Legislation Call for Action in the Senate***

Washington, D.C. – Representatives Jane Harman (D-CA), Mac Thornberry (R-TX), Christopher Shays (R-CT) and Jim Gibbons (R-NV) joined together today to call on Senate Republicans and Democrats and the White House to work out their differences and pass legislation to create a Department of Homeland Security.

Each of the lawmakers introduced legislation to create a Department of Homeland Security in May 2002 and were key supporters of HR 5005, the Homeland Security Department bill which passed the House in July.

Representative Harman stated: "The Senate is bogged down on an issue that should not cause this legislation to die. The Senate should be able to vote on alternative civil service provisions, enact one of them, and move the bill to conference with the House. The White House can work with the conference to fashion the final agreement on civil service. Every President since Kennedy has had the flexibility to exempt agencies from collective bargaining for national security reasons. The flexibility has been applied 11 times over 23 years. Surely this experience can help us find a compromise all parties can support."

"In this era of uncertainty," Thornberry stated, "the American people want results, not rhetoric. They want to know their government is taking steps to make them more secure. No one can guarantee that a fully functioning Department of Homeland Security would have prevented the September 11th tragedy or any other specific attack. But we can be assured that without significant organizational reform, the U.S. is not as prepared as it can be, or as prepared as it should be, to protect our citizens and our country. Yet, the days continue to pass by."

"The bottom line is, we need to get this bill out of the Senate and into conference where the differences can be addressed," said Shays. "The House has done its work, and we need the Senate to act to move this process forward and protect our Homeland."

"It is irresponsible and unbelievable that the Senate has not passed the Department of Homeland Security legislation yet," stated Gibbons, Vice- Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee on Terrorism and Homeland Security. "Our nation faces dangerous threats, and we need to ensure that our government has a coordinate and effective response-not a hodgepodge of over 100 different federal agencies. To allow the creation of the Department of Homeland Security to get bogged down by political rhetoric and finger-pointing is simply unacceptable. The House passed a comprehensive and responsible bill months ago. Now, it is time for the Senate to do its work to protect the people of the United States."

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